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Classification of Statistical Activities – Proposed Revisions

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Introduction

At its October 2005 meeting, the *Classification of International Statistical Activities* was adopted by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES). Its main purpose was to classify the statistical activities of international organizations in the Database of International Statistical Activities, maintained by the UNECE secretariat. This classification has since been adopted for other purposes. For example, it is used by the PARIS21 group for coordinating technical assistance, and a slightly revised version of the first three domains of this classification was adopted as part of the Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX) Content-oriented Guidelines in January 2009.¹

Domains 1 to 3 (Demographic and social statistics, Economic statistics and Environment and multi-domain statistics) relate to subject-matter activities, typically resulting in data outputs but also including work aimed at developing or revising standards.

The UNSD Expert Group on International Economic and Social Classifications will be reviewing the classification and will consider its inclusion in the broader family of international classifications at the May 2011 meeting.

This paper provides a description of how the Classification of Statistical Activities has been implemented by a national statistical office (Statistics Canada), and the classification challenges in its implementation. A number of changes to the classification are proposed in the paper for consideration by the Expert Group. If accepted, the proposals may be brought forward to the UNECE secretariat for further consideration.

2. Implementation of the Classification of Statistical Activities in a national statistical office

Statistics Canada maintains a centralized corporate repository of statistical metadata called the Integrated Metadatabase (IMDB). One of the roles of the IMDB is to store the Agency's "definitional" metadata, which consists of variables and their related definitions, classifications, and the questions to measure these variables. Once completed, the IMDB will contain a complete inventory of variables measured and disseminated by all our surveys and statistical programs.

In order to organize the variables on the Agency's website, it was decided to use the Classification of Statistical Activities. There are two modules that currently organize variables using the classification:

Statistics by variable: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/imdb-bmdi/indexStatDEt-eng.htm> ; and
Variables and definitions: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/concepts/definitions/index-eng.htm>

Although the inventory of variables is not completed, we have encountered some challenges using the classification, and have had to modify the classification in order to better reflect the significance of certain variables in our statistical system, particularly in Domain 1.

¹ Statistical Commission and Economic Commission for Europe, Conference of European Statisticians: Ownership and maintenance of the Classification of Statistical Activities, ECE/CES/BUR/2009/OCT/19, 24 September 2009 (Washington, D.C.).

For example, the activity heading Population and Migration is very broad, and considering the number of variables and the amount of data published on this “activity”, we have split it into the following three activities:

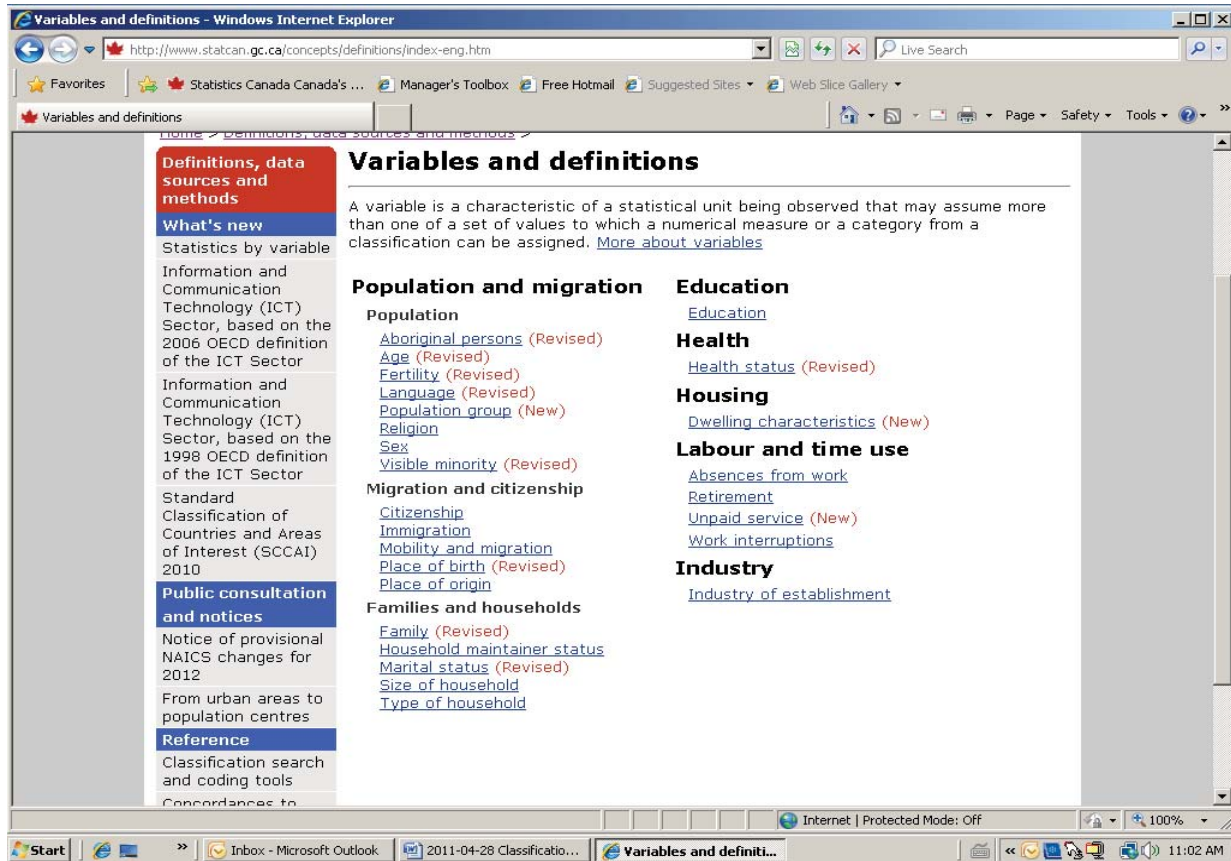
- Population;
- Migration and citizenship; and
- Families and households.

Included under Population are the variables for age, sex, fertility, language, religion and ethnicity. Social statistics are commonly reported by these characteristics. For data publications, this heading could also serve to organize data for particular population groups by the characteristics such as age, sex, language, religion or ethnicity. The activity Migration and citizenship includes variables on immigration, citizenship, mobility and place of birth. When organizing data publications, data on particular population groups such as immigrants or refugees would also be included here. The activity group for Families and households organizes information on the structure and size of families and households. Variables classified here include marital status, size of household and household living arrangements. When organizing data publications, data relating to particular kinds of families or households can be shown under this heading.

When considered from the point-of-view of demographic and social statistics, there is much overlap in what is encompassed by the headings “Labour” and “Time use”. Examples of particular variables, which are included under both headings are work interruptions, unpaid service/unpaid work and absence from work. Much of the statistics on “Labour” including the basic measure of employed, unemployed and not in the labour force have a direct bearing on time use.

Statistics Canada’s implementation of the modified classification is shown in Figure 1. The modifications allowed for the organization of the variables and definitions in such a way as to (1) allow for more classes where needed and (2) reduce overlap in concepts covered by subject headings.

Figure 1. Variables classified by a modified version of the UNECE Classification of Statistical Activities.



3. Proposed changes to the Classification of Statistical Activities Revision 1

Proposed changes focus on Domain 1 Demographic and social statistics. It is proposed that 1.1 Population and migration activity be split into 3 activity groups: 1.1 Population; 1.2 Migration and citizenship; and 1.3 Families and households; and Labour and Time use be combined. Table 1 presents a comparison between the existing classification and the proposed changes for consideration by the Expert Group.

Table 1. Proposed changes to the Classification of Statistical Activities Revision 1.

Classification of Statistical Activities Revision 1 (2009)	Proposed changes
Domain 1: Demographic and social statistics	Domain 1: Demographic and social statistics
1.1 Population and migration	1.1 Population
1.2 Labour	1.2 Migration and citizenship
1.3 Education	1.3 Families and households
1.4 Health	1.4 Labour and time use
1.5 Income and consumption	1.5 Education
1.6 Social protection	1.6 Health
1.7 Human settlements and housing	1.7 Income and consumption
1.8 Justice and crime	1.8 Social protection
1.9 Culture	1.9 Housing
1.10 Political and other community activities	1.10 Justice and crime
1.11 Time use	1.11 Culture

